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ABSTRACT

A survey conducted with a cross section of the national population produced the following findings. First, not only has television grown to the point where only 2% of American homes receive fewer than three channels, it has also grown in public esteem. It has become the number one source of news and the most credible and frequently used medium. In 1972 the public regarded it as the best source of election news and as the institution which had been most successful in operating in periods of social change. It was felt that its news coverage was fair, its handing of controversial matters adequate, and the balance of its programing proper, although many wished to see an increase of serious cultural programing. The public indicated its reluctance to see more governmental control and about 75% of the people opposed pay television. The majority felt that reruns were frequent, but not overly so, and most believed that commercials were both helpful to them and a fair way to finance television programing. (PB)

ED 079944

what people think of television and other mass media 1959-1972

A report by
The Roper Organization, Inc.

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PREFACE

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TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER"

Since the first Roper survey in this series thirteen years ago, the influence and shifting roles of the major American media have been changing so dramatically that each new study can only be read in the light of a dynamic social context.

A most obvious alteration in the media picture since 1959 has been the steadily increasing availability of television and radio service, as shown in the table below:

	June 1959	*March 1973*
Commercial TV	520	702
Educational TV	43	225
AM radio	3,377	4,385
Commercial FM	622	2,434
Educational FM	154	580
Daily newspapers	1,755	1,761
Non-competitive dailies	1,400 *(1961)*	1,455 *(1971)*
Cities with 2 or more competing dailies	61 *(1961)*	37 *(1971)*

Sources: FCC for broadcast data; R. B. Nixon and Editor & Publisher for newspaper data.

Although the greatest percentage growth has occurred in educational television and in FM (both commercial and educational), even the number of stations in the long-established commercial AM and television categories has grown substantially. Today, 20 per cent of

American homes can receive 10 or more television signals while only two per cent receive fewer than three signals.

Less obvious are the changes in daily newspaper publishing. While the number of dailies has remained essentially the same, many once-thriving metropolitan dailies have disappeared. A decrease in the number of big-city dailies, brought on by merger or liquidation, has been almost precisely balanced by the growth in the number of suburban and small-town journals. The fierce competition for readership that characterized many multi-daily markets is now limited to the 37 cities in which separately owned dailies compete economically.

Just as Roper's interviewers were completing their work for this survey, the last issue of *Life* magazine was published, leaving no national weekly or bi-weekly general-interest magazine. Instead there are the specialty publications; paradoxically, the largest of them, *TV Guide*, owes its existence to the widespread interest in another medium.

On the horizon are technological developments which may have considerable impact upon the present communications mix. Audio-visual cassettes, still in very limited use and quite expensive for the average consumer, are an uncertain entry in the mass communications market. Cable television, on the other hand, has shown significant growth, almost entirely as a re-conveyor of broadcast signals; at present it serves about 10 per cent of the homes in the country. Cable entrepreneurs are showing active interest in so-called "pay-cable-TV," which involves extra subscriber charges for individual programs of exceptional interest or for special program "packages." Because many of the programs which hold the greatest profit potential for pay-cable operators are currently broadcast over the air (e.g., major sports events, recent motion pictures), a confrontation is in the making between conventional broadcasters and pay-TV advocates. The latter argue their right to bid for programming in an open market and to put cable to whatever profit-making uses they can devise. Broadcasters contend that viewers would be forced to pay for the programs they now receive without charge and that, because of the economics of cable installation, more than half the homes in the country would be deprived of access to the programming transferred from broadcasting to cable.

While these economic and technological factors have emerged, socio-political pressures and counter-pressures have swirled around

the industry. Complaints from some highly-placed government officials have been directed at broadcast journalism; there are demands for more coverage of consumerist issues; minorities are asking a greater share of air time and influence in programming; some parents want program changes and less advertising directed toward children; violence in programming is decried; questions have been raised about the number and content of commercials for products ranging from gasoline to breakfast cereal and headache remedies.

The extent to which many of these critical views are shared by the general public is clarified and given perspective by the data presented in this report. Of particular importance are the answers to trend questions, since they afford a measure of television's response to public needs over the years of its existence as a national medium.

May, 1973

Roy Danish, Director
Television Information Office

I

Trends in Attitudes Toward Television and Other Media: A Fourteen-Year Review

By Burns W. Roper

Since the first study in this series was conducted in 1959, successive studies have found an almost steady increase in the American public's regard for television and approval of its performance. On every comparative measurement, the 1971 study found levels of approval for television as high as or higher than they had been in previous years.

As in the past, the television industry during the seventies has had problems to cope with and criticisms to face—some continuing and some new. Recently, broadcasters faced the problems of covering fairly a very one-sided national election. There has been the question of proper handling of the new "freedom" pertaining to sex and other subjects formerly not brought into the open. Organized groups have focused criticism on drug commercials and commercials on children's programs. Pay television has continued to be an issue. Questions have been raised about the responsibility of broadcast journalism and/or the safeguarding of the First Amendment.

Besides asking trend questions used in past studies, our latest includes new questions to throw some light on these problems.

The field work was done late in November, 1972, after the Presidential election. Analysis of the data shows television continuing in its commanding position with the American public. While there are some percentage point differences, both up and down, in attitudes

and opinions about TV and other media between the 1971 and the present study, the differences are small and the general pattern of response is the same and consistent: The American public continues to regard TV as its Number One source of news. It continues to be wary of government regulation. And, while there is some criticism, the American public generally approves of what it gets on television, both in programming and commercials.

Source of News

As in the previous studies, to make bias less likely, all questions comparing media have been asked before those questions which focus specifically on television.

The first question in each study has asked people where they get most of their news. Television, which has led since 1963, has slightly increased its sizeable lead over the second-place medium, to 14 points.

"First, I'd like to ask you where you usually get most of your news about what's going on in the world today—from the newspapers or radio or television or magazines or talking to people or where?"

Source of most news:	*12/59* %	*11/61* %	*11/63* %	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %
Television	51	52	55	58	64	59	60	64
Newspapers	57	57	53	56	55	49	48	50
Radio	34	34	29	26	28	25	23	21
Magazines	8	9	6	8	7	7	5	6
People	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	4
Don't know or no answer	1	3	3	3	2	3	1	1
Total mentions	154	157	147	153	158	145	140	145

In past studies, newspapers have led television as the main source of news among the college-educated. This study finds the two media almost even, with newspapers named by 58 per cent, television by 56 per cent.

Multiple answers have always been accepted to this question when people have designated more than one medium. Analysis of multiple responses shows television continuing to lead as the single most-relied-upon medium (one-third of respondents mentioned only television).

Analysis of multiple responses:	*12/59* %	*11/61* %	*11/63* %	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %
Television only	19	18	23	23	25	29	31	33
Newspapers only	21	19	21	20	18	19	21	19
Both newspapers and television (with or without other media)	26	27	24	28	30	25	22	26
Newspapers and other media but not television	10	11	8	8	7	6	5	5
Television and other media but not newspapers	6	7	8	6	8	5	7	5
Media other than television or newspapers	17	15	13	12	10	13	13	12
Don't know or no answer	1	3	3	3	2	3	1	*

The Relative Credibility of Media

Since 1961, television has consistently led as the most believable news medium. After reaching a two-to-one advantage over newspapers in 1968, it has enjoyed a seven-to-three lead in the last two studies.

"If you got conflicting or different reports of the same news story from radio, television, the magazines and the newspapers, which of the four versions would you be most inclined to believe—the one on radio or television or magazines or newspapers?"

Most believable:	*12/59* %	*11/61* %	*11/63* %	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %
Television	29	39	36	41	41	44	49	48
Newspapers	32	24	24	23	24	21	20	21
Radio	12	12	12	8	7	8	10	8
Magazines	10	10	10	10	8	11	9	10
Don't know or no answer	17	17	18	18	20	16	12	13

In previous years, respondents have also been asked which medium they would be *least* inclined to believe. Because television consistently ranked lowest among the four media, this reverse question was deleted this year to provide space for new questions felt to be more informative.

The Relative Desirability of Media

Television has been chosen as the most desirable medium in each study since the series began in 1959. By 1971, television led newspapers, three to one. Although newspapers show a small improvement this year, television still holds a long 34-point lead.

"Suppose that you could continue to have only one of the following—radio, television, newspapers or magazines—which one of the four would you most want to keep?"

Most want to keep:	*12/59* %	*11/61* %	*11/63* %	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %
Television	42	42	44	49	53	50	58	56
Newspapers	32	28	28	27	26	24	19	22
Radio	19	22	19	15	14	17	17	16
Magazines	4	4	5	5	3	5	5	5
Don't know or no answer	3	4	4	4	4	4	1	1

Among the college-educated, television's lead over newspapers has narrowed since the 1971 study. However, it has maintained a good lead, well above its even position with newspapers in 1968, the previous Presidential election year.

	College educated						
Most want to keep:	*12/59* %	*11/61* %	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %
Television	27	34	34	39	37	47	44
Newspapers	47	37	42	38	36	26	32
Radio	15	16	11	13	13	17	15
Magazines	9	12	10	8	12	10	8
Don't know or no answer	2	1	3	2	2	*	1

Among the upper economic groups, television has maintained the slightly more than two-to-one lead over newspapers it gained in 1971.

	Upper economic levels						
Most want to keep:	*12/59* %	*11/61* %	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %
Television	35	42	45	45	45	50	52
Newspapers	41	33	34	33	30	24	25
Radio	15	17	13	13	15	18	16
Magazines	7	6	7	6	6	7	5
Don't know or no answer	2	2	1	3	4	1	2

Trends in Hours of Viewing

Since 1961, we have asked about the amount of time individuals spent viewing television. While answers to this question are subject to respondents' reporting error, the trend results are meaningful, even if the absolute responses may be somewhat off the mark.

Television viewing increased steadily until 1971, and this year leveled off at two hours and 50 minutes daily.

"On an average day, about how many hours do you personally spend watching TV?"

	11/61	*11/63*	*11/64*	*1/67*	*11/68*	*1/71*	*11/72*
Median hours of viewing	2:17	2:34	2:38	2:41	2:47	2:50	2:50

Television viewing by the college-educated and upper income groups, while each year consistently below the national average, increased steadily until 1971. This year finds reported viewing by the college-educated at a somewhat lower level and reported viewing by the upper economic levels very slightly lower.

Median reported hours of viewing by:	*11/61*	*11/64*	*1/67*	*11/68*	*1/71*	*11/72*
College-educated	1:48	2:04	2:10	2:17	2:19	2:12
Upper economic levels	2:02	2:14	2:21	2:24	2:30	2:29

II

Media in Election Years

Since 1964, people have been asked after each of five elections (three Presidential and two mid-term) about their sources of information about candidates running at different levels of government:

*"During the last election campaign, from what source did you become best acquainted with the candidates for city (town) and county offices — from the newspapers or radio or television or magazines or talking to people or where? What about candidates for state offices? And what about the candidates for national offices — the Presidency, the Senate and the House of Representatives?"**

In every year, newspapers have led television in acquainting people with candidates for local offices, and by slightly more this year than in past years. The point spreads are somewhat less in mid-term years.

Local offices:	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %
Newspapers	42	44	40	37	43
Television	27	32	26	32	28
Radio	10	10	6	6	7
People	18	16	23	20	22
Magazines	1	1	1	1	1
Other	7	6	4	5	5
Total mentions	105	109	100	101	106

* The question about candidates for national offices was not included in the 1967 study. When asked following the mid-term election of 1970, the question read: "And what about candidates for national office—the Senate and the House of Representatives?"

The results for state offices are less clear. Television and newspapers led other media in the 1964 Presidential election and were about even. Television gained a modest lead over newspapers in 1968. In 1972, television stayed at the same level, and newspapers came up to an equal position. In the surveys following mid-term elections, television led newspapers more strongly in 1971 than in 1967.

State offices:	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %
Newspapers	41	41	37	30	42
Television	43	50	42	50	43
Radio	10	9	6	6	7
People	8	9	9	9	10
Magazines	1	1	1	1	1
Other	4	4	4	4	4
Total mentions	107	114	99	100	107

Television clearly overshadows newspapers as a source for becoming acquainted with candidates for national office, whether in mid-term or Presidential elections.

National offices:	*11/64* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %
Television	64	65	62	65
Newspapers	36	24	24	29
Radio	9	4	4	8
Magazines	6	5	4	5
People	4	4	5	6
Other	3	2	2	2
Total mentions	122	104	101	115

Variation of the Election Questions

The questions cited above were asked of one-half of the sample following the elections of 1970 and 1972. In earlier years there had been some question in our minds as to whether these questions may be imprecise because of inconsistent respondent interpretation of "local" vs. "state" vs. "national." (For example, are Congressmen thought of as "local" because they are elected only from their dis-

tricts, or as "national" because they go to Washington? Are U. S. Senators thought of as "state" or "national"?)

We therefore asked differently-worded questions of the other half of the sample after the 1970 and 1972 elections, using what we felt to be clearer illustrations for the three levels of office:

> *"From what source did you become best acquainted with the candidates running in local elections – like mayor, members of the state legislature, etc. – from the newspapers or radio or television or magazines or talking to people or where? What about the candidates running in statewide elections – like U. S. Senator and Governor? And what about candidates in the national election – for President and Vice President?"**

As with the first version of the question, newspapers led television in acquainting people with *local* candidates, both in 1971 and in this year's study.

Local elections:	*11/71* %	*11/72* %
Newspapers	41	41
Television	27	31
Radio	6	7
People	19	23
Magazines	1	1
Other	5	5
Total mentions	99	108

In this second version, where statewide elections are identified as Senatorial and gubernatorial races, television clearly leads newspapers. Both versions of the state questions found television stronger relative to newspapers after the 1970 mid-term election than in 1972. This may be characteristic of the two kinds of elections, or it may just be a peculiarity of these particular elections.

* The question on national elections was asked only in 1972 and not in 1971.

Statewide elections:	*1/71* %	*11/72* %
Newspapers	29	39
Television	51	49
Radio	6	7
People	10	9
Magazines	2	1
Other	4	3
Total mentions	102	108

Answers to this second version of the question at the national level clearly demonstrate television's ascendancy.

National elections:	*11/72* %
Television	66
Newspapers	26
Radio	6
People	5
Magazines	5
Other	2
Total mentions	110

The three questions in this more explicit form confirm as well as clarify the findings of the first version questions used in the past. At least up to now, newspapers appear to be the most important medium in local elections. Both newspapers and television are important in "state" elections—television more so than newspapers for the top statewide elections for U. S. Senator and Governor. Television is dominant in national elections.

Another and somewhat broader question including issues as well as candidates and focusing solely on the four media further confirms television's dominant position at the national level. Possibly owing to President Nixon's restrained use of television in the campaign, television's lead over newspapers has narrowed a little since 1968, but it is still two to one.

"Which would you say gives you the clearest understanding of the candidates and issues in national elections – radio, television, newspapers or magazines?"

National issues and candidates:	*11/64* %	*11/68* %	*11/72* %
Television	**51**	**57**	**54**
Newspapers	**26**	**23**	**27**
Magazines	**10**	**10**	**11**
Radio	**6**	**4**	**5**

III

Media in a Period of Social Change

The sixties and the early seventies have been characterized by much social change. It has not only been a period that has seen changes in life styles, social mores and customs, but also one when many traditional institutions and ways of thinking have been challenged. How well has television adjusted to these changes and challenges?

One question asked in every study provides an over-all estimate of how well television and newspapers have performed at the local level, compared with two other community institutions: schools and government. People were asked to make separate evaluations of each:

> *"In every community, the schools, the newspapers, the television stations, the local government, each has a different job to do. Would you say that the local (schools, newspapers, television stations, government) are doing an excellent, good, fair or poor job?"*

From a back-seat position in 1959, television stations moved to front position in 1967 and are first today on good performance. While more than one-third rate television's performance as less than good, few low-rate it as poor—9 per cent—which is about the same percentage as rate the performance of schools and newspapers as poor. By comparison, 17 per cent give a "poor" rating to their local governments.

	Per cent considering the performance as:		
	Excellent or good	*Fair or poor*	*Don't know or no answer*
	%	%	%
Television stations			
11/72	60	36	4
1/71	59	36	5
11/68	57	36	7
1/67	64	30	6
11/64	62	28	10
11/63	60	31	9
11/61	57	34	9
12/59	59	32	9
Schools			
11/72	50	35	15
1/71	50	37	13
11/68	58	29	13
1/67	61	25	14
11/64	62	22	16
11/63	61	24	15
11/61	61	25	14
12/59	64	26	10
Newspapers			
11/72	51	43	6
1/71	48	46	6
11/68	51	41	8
1/67	59	34	7
11/64	55	36	9
11/63	55	36	9
11/61	59	32	9
12/59	64	30	6
Local government			
11/72	36	53	11
1/71	34	55	11
11/68	41	47	12
1/67	45	42	13
11/64	47	38	15
11/63	43	43	14
11/61	45	42	13
12/59	44	43	13

Aspects of Opinion on the Air

Always important, but particularly so in times of change, is broadcasting's handling of opinions: giving the right amount of time to them and being fair about them. Therefore, questions on this subject were included in the past two studies.

Few fault television for devoting too much time to opinion programs. Four times as many say they would like more time rather than less given to opinions, but half of those who expressed their views feel there is about the right amount devoted to such broadcast material.

"Do you think television devotes too much, too little, or about the right amount of time to having people express their opinions on the air?"

	11/71 %	*11/72* %
Too much time to opinion	**9**	**9**
Too little time to opinion	**31**	**36**
About the right amount	**51**	**47**
Don't know or no answer	**9**	**8**

As to fairness in presenting a balanced spectrum of opinions, the same substantial majority this year gives television a clean bill of health. As in 1971, the college-educated are somewhat more critical. The percentages answering "fair" dropped five points among Democrats and increased an equal five points among Republicans, possibly reflecting the strong showing of the Republican Presidential candidate in the election.

"In its news programs, discussion shows and interviews, television devotes a certain amount of time to opinions—opinions of community leaders, leaders of organizations, politicians and just average citizens. In presenting opinions, television is supposed to be fair and balanced in showing different points of view. Do you think television is fair or is not fair about showing different points of view?" (Note: This question was asked of half the sample.)

	Total		Democrat		Republican		Independent		College-educated	
	1/71 %	11/72 %	1/71 %	11/72 %	1/71 %	11/72 %	1/71 %	11/72 %	1/71 %	11/72 %
Fair	69	68	73	68	65	70	68	70	60	61
Not fair	21	21	18	18	24	23	26	22	32	30
Don't know or no answer	10	11	9	14	11	7	6	8	8	9

When people (21 per cent of the respondents) answered that television is "not fair," they were asked two additional questions to illuminate their perceptions of "unfairness." As in the 1971 study, the criticism is not one-way. It leans toward "too-much-extreme-and-far-out opinion" and "too-much-to-the-left" opinion—in just about the same proportions this year as in 1971.

"Do you think there is too much extreme and far-out opinion on television, or too much conventional and middle-of-the-road opinion, or about the proper balance between the two?"

	1/71 %	11/72 %
Too much extreme and far-out opinion	10	9
Too much conventional, middle-of-the-road opinion	6	6
Proper balance	4	4
Don't know or no answer	1	2
Total "not fair"	21	21

"Do you think that overall the people who are given an opportunity to express their opinions on TV lean too much to the left politically, or too much to the right politically, or that on the whole there is a proper balance between them?"

	1/71 %	11/72 %
Too much to the left	7	7
Too much to the right	2	3
Proper balance	7	7
Don't know or no answer	.5	4
Total "not fair"	21	21

Because in 1971 so few answered that television is unfair about showing different points of view, most people did not have a chance to express themselves specifically on either of the follow-up questions: the balance on television between extreme-and-far-out vs. middle-of-the-road opinions and the balance between to-the-left vs. to-the-right opinions. Therefore, to pursue the matter further and determine the full amount of possible criticism, half the sample in this study was asked the same sequence of questions asked in 1971 as reported above, to see whether differences had occurred since then, and the other half of the sample was asked the two questions without the preliminary screening question on over-all fairness.

Of this latter sample, two-thirds think the balance is right or have no opinion as to whether there is too much extreme or too much conventional opinion. Those who question the balance divide about equally between the two.

"In its news programs, discussion shows and interviews, television devotes a certain amount of time to opinions — opinions of community leaders, leaders of organizations, politicians and just average citizens. In presenting opinions, television is supposed to be fair and balanced in showing different points of view. Do you think there is too much extreme and far-out opinion on television, or too much conventional and middle-of-the-road opinion, or about the proper balance between the two?"

	%
Too much extreme and far-out	17
Too much conventional, middle-of-the-road	15
Proper balance	54
Don't know or no answer	14

Four-fifths of the people in this sample think there is a proper balance between right and left, or have no opinion. Twice as many of the critics think there is too much to-the-left opinion as think there is too much to-the-right.

"Do you think that overall the people who are given an opportunity to express their opinions on TV lean too much to the left politically, or too much to the right politically, or that on the whole there is a proper balance between them?"

	%
Too much to the left	**14**
Too much to the right	**6**
Proper balance	**58**
Don't know or no answer	**22**

Fairness of Campaign Coverage

Political campaigns might be expected to trigger most accusations of unfairness, particularly in a very lopsided campaign. However, a majority of voters for both major party candidates in both the 1968 and 1972 elections felt there was no unfairness in election coverage by any of the four major media.

"There have been both good and bad things said about the way different media covered the election campaigns. Here is a list of four major sources of news and information — newspapers, television, magazines and radio. First, do you think any of them were unfair in the way they covered or treated Richard Nixon and his campaign?"

"And do you think any of them were unfair in the way they covered and treated George McGovern and his campaign?"

	Republican campaigns:		*Democratic campaigns:*	
	Nixon voters 11/68 %	*Nixon voters 11/72* %	*Humphrey voters 11/68* %	*McGovern voters 11/72* %
Yes, unfair	**18**	**31**	**24**	**38**
Newspapers	***6***	***11***	***7***	***17***
Television	***6***	***15***	***11***	***15***
Magazines	***1***	***3***	***1***	***2***
Radio	*	***3***	***2***	***2***
All were	***4***	***4***	***4***	***8***
Some were, but don't remember which	***3***	***3***	***4***	***2***
None unfair	**76**	**63**	**65**	**55**
Don't know or no answer	**6**	**6**	**11**	**7**

The 1972 election drew more charges of unfairness than the 1968 campaign, from voters for candidates of both parties. The charges, as would be expected, centered on television and newspapers, the leading media for information about national elections. But television was singled out for being unfair by only a small minority: 15 per cent of Nixon voters and 15 per cent of McGovern voters.

Changing Mores

Since early in the sixties, there has been increasingly open and frank discussion of such things as The Pill, homosexuality, premarital sexual relations and the like in magazines, books and so forth. One of television's problems has been how to keep up with the times in this respect and at the same time not violate the sanctity of the home with programs considered to be offensive. Therefore, a new question was included in this study asking for reactions to the handling by television of certain subjects now being more openly discussed. A majority of people think they have been handled well—and among the young and the college-educated, who are likely to indicate the direction of future trends in public attitudes, it is a substantial majority.

"Now turning to another subject. Things like sex relations, homosexuality and venereal disease are the subjects of many television programs — news programs, documentaries and serious dramatic shows. Do you think such subjects are usually handled responsibly and informatively, or are usually handled sensationally and offensively?"

	Total %	*18-34 years old* %	*College-educated* %
Responsibly and informatively	**57**	**66**	**66**
Sensationally and offensively	**19**	**15**	**14**
Half and half (volunteered)	**12**	**10**	**13**
Don't know or no answer	**12**	**9**	**7**

The Question of Government Control

Two questions on government control have been asked in previous studies, one in some studies, one in other studies. Both were included in this year's and in the 1971 study, each asked of alternate respondents, or one-half of the total sample.

One question asked about *programs*. Most people think the government has the right amount of control now or feel there should be less of it. While the percentage in favor of *more* government control of programs has increased some since 1971, the percentage favoring *less* control has increased even more.

"There has been some talk recently about the government paying more attention to what kinds of programs are shown on television and being more critical of what should and should not be shown. Some people are in favor of this as a way of ensuring high quality television programming. Others are opposed to it on the grounds that it would result in television programs which the government, but not necessarily the public, would like. How about you — do you think: the government should exercise more control over what programs are on TV, or there is about the right amount of government control of TV programming now, or the government should have less control over what programs are on TV?"

	11/63 %	11/64 %	1/67 %	1/71 %	11/72 %
The government should exercise more control over what programs are on TV	16	19	18	12	17
There is about the right amount of government control of TV programming now	43	41	40	48	38
The government should have less control over what programs are on TV	27	26	28	31	39
Don't know or no answer	14	14	14	9	6

Government Control of Television News

The second question asked about *news*. An even smaller minority wants government control of news than wants more control over programming. The percentage favoring control of news has increased some since 1971 among the college-educated and Republicans. But the vast majority in all groups is against it.

"There has been some talk recently about the government investigating news programs on television. Some people are in favor of this as a way of insuring that television news programs would be fair, complete and impartial. Others are opposed to it on the grounds that we'd run the danger of having government-managed news. How about you—do you think . . ."

	Total			Grade school or less			College-educated		
	11/68 %	1/71 %	11/72 %	11/68 %	1/71 %	11/72 %	11/68 %	1/71 %	11/72 %
The government *should* have control over TV news programs	11	14	14	17	22	22	5	7	13
The government should *not* have control over TV news programs	76	80	79	61	66	67	92	91	83
Don't know or no answer	13	6	7	22	12	11	3	2	4

	Democrat		Republican		Independent	
	1/71 %	11/72 %	1/71 %	11/72 %	1/71 %	11/72 %
The government *should* have control over TV news programs	17	14	13	16	10	12
The government should *not* have control over TV news programs	77	78	82	80	87	83
Don't know or no answer	6	8	5	4	3	5

IV

Attitudes Toward Programs and Commercials

Providing the right "mix" of programs to satisfy television's broad audience is a continuing problem for broadcasters. Questions have been asked since 1968 to find out public feeling about the balancing of major program categories: (1) entertainment vs. news and public affairs, and (2) special interest vs. general interest entertainment programs.

News and Public Affairs vs. Entertainment

The results in all three surveys indicate majority approval of the existing balance. In both 1968 and 1971, there were twice as many respondents who would have liked more news and public affairs as against more entertainment. While the same percentage this year as in previous years would like more of news and public affairs, the figure for entertainment went up six points.

"Magazines and television serve their readers and viewers in different ways. Where a magazine may decide to publish only business news or articles for teenagers or features for housewives, television cannot. It must serve all groups and cater to all interests. This presents the problem of how to have a proper balance of programs and I want to ask you how you feel about program balance.

"First – there is both entertainment programming on TV and news and public affairs programming. How do you personally feel about

the balance between news and public affairs versus entertainment — would you like to see more news and public affairs on television, or more entertainment, or do you like the balance that now exists?"

	11/68 %	1/71 %	11/72 %
Want more news and public affairs	23	22	23
Like existing balance	59	64	58
Want more entertainment	11	10	16
Don't know or no answer	7	4	3

The Cultural / Light Programming Ratio

There is somewhat less satisfaction with the mix between the two types of entertainment programs, but more people in all three studies expressed satisfaction with the present balance than want different fare. Somewhat fewer this year than in 1971 expressed satisfaction with the present balance, but the critical viewers show a substantial division between preferring more special interest programs and more general interest ones.

"There is a certain amount of entertainment programming for people with specialized interests — ballets, classics of literature, serious music and so forth — and there is of course general interest entertainment programming designed for much broader audiences — variety shows, westerns, comedies, spy thrillers, etc. Would you like to see more of the special interest type of entertainment on television, or more of the general interest type of entertainment, or do you like the balance that now exists?"

	11/68 %	1/71 %	11/72 %
Want more special interest	31	30	34
Like balance now	41	45	39
Want more general interest	21	21	24
Don't know or no answer	7	4	3

This year, as in previous years, fewer college-educated than less-well-educated like the present balance. While many more of the college-educated vote for more special interest than general interest programs, the figure for general interest increased this year.

	Grade school			High school			College		
	11/68	1/71	11/72	11/68	1/71	11/72	11/68	1/71	11/72
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Want more special interest	18	16	19	28	27	29	59	50	54
Like balance now	48	51	48	45	48	42	27	36	27
Want more general interest	26	26	28	23	23	26	11	12	17
Don't know or no answer	8	7	5	4	2	3	3	2	2

Although some small shifts have occurred, the results of these balance questions still leave us with the same three conclusions as in previous years:

(1) Television has not achieved a perfect balance,
(2) However, television has done a good job of staying to the middle of the road; and
(3) "Sweetening" the fare for one minority would seem automatically to "sour" it for an opposing minority.

Attitudes Toward Reruns

Related to the program balance problem is the question of reruns: are there too many of them or not enough; are they welcome or not. Four questions about them were included in this study.

When answering about reruns, people know what they are talking about. Practically everyone has had experience with them.

"How often do you turn on a TV program and find that it is a repeat or a rerun of a program you have already seen – quite often, sometimes, or rarely?"

	%
Quite often	44
Sometimes	35
Rarely	17
Never	2
Don't know or no answer	2

It could be assumed that reruns are reaching the point of public annoyance if people who wish to watch television find, frequently,

nothing they want to see because of the reruns. While this happens sometimes to a number of people, it appears not to happen often to most people.

"How often do you find that, because of the reruns, there are no programs on the air you want to see – quite often, sometimes, or rarely?"

	Total %	Watches TV on average day: Less than 3 hours %	3 up to 5 hours %	5 or more hours %
Quite often	27	26	29	29
Sometimes	34	33	37	39
Rarely	28	31	25	24
Never	8	8	7	6
Don't know or no answer	3	2	2	2

Answers to two further questions suggest that the television public is not fed up with reruns and well might welcome more of them. Even among people who say they have frequently found nothing they want to watch because of reruns, a good many have wished for a rerun of a program they missed, and wished for a rerun of a program they have liked.

"How often have you missed television programs you wanted to see and wished they would be run again so that you could see them – quite often, sometimes, or rarely?"

	Total %	Experienced finding no programs they want to see because of reruns: Quite often %	Sometimes %	Rarely %	Never, don't know %
Quite often	22	23	20	24	21
Sometimes	39	37	50	33	23
Rarely	30	34	26	36	20
Never	7	6	4	7	27
Don't know or no answer	2	*	*	*	9

"How often have you seen a program that you liked and wished it would be rerun so that you could see it a second time—quite often, sometimes, or rarely?"

	Total	Experienced finding no programs they want to see because of reruns: Quite often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never, don't know
	%	%	%	%	%
Quite often	14	15	12	17	11
Sometimes	36	34	44	35	22
Rarely	35	37	33	39	25
Never	14	14	11	9	34
Don't know or no answer	1	*	*	*	8

Attitudes Toward Commercials

As has been found in the past studies, most people accept the commercials as a way of television life, although this study finds a little more criticism of them than in 1971.

One question included since 1963 asks respondents to select from four statements (two favorable to commercials, two unfavorable) the one with which they most closely agree. While more selected a favorable statement than an unfavorable one, a few more this year than in 1971 chose an unfavorable statement.

"Which one of these four statements comes closest to describing how you feel about commercials on television?"

	11/63	11/64	1/67	11/68	1/71	11/72
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I dislike practically all commercials on television	10	10	11	13	11	14
While some of the commercials on television are all right, most of them are very annoying	29	26	26	25	24	27
There are some very annoying commercials on television, but most of them are perfectly all right	31	35	33	35	38	32
The commercials on television seldom annoy me—in fact, I often enjoy them	24	23	21	22	24	24
Don't know or no answer	6	6	9	5	3	3

At the same time, a second question, designed to determine attitudes toward the concept of having commercially-sponsored tele-

vision, found the same high percentage as in former years accepting the concept. Non-acceptance edged up a little, "no opinion" down some.

"Different people have all sorts of things, both good and bad, to say about TV commercials – for example – that they are in poor taste, that they are informative, that they are amusing, that there are too many of them, etc. Now, everything considered, do you agree or disagree that having commercials on TV is a fair price to pay for being able to watch it?"

	11/63 %	11/64 %	1/67 %	11/68 %	1/71 %	11/72 %
Agree	77	81	80	80	80	81
Disagree	14	10	9	10	10	14
Don't know or no answer	9	9	11	10	10	5

In answer to a new question, a majority of people, and particularly the heavy viewers, say they find that television commercials are helpful to them, at least sometimes.

"Do you find that television commercials are often helpful to you, sometimes helpful, seldom helpful, or never helpful to you?"

		Watches TV on average day:		
	Total %	*Less than 3 hours* %	*3 up to 5 hours* %	*5 or more hours* %
Often helpful	10	8	10	15
Sometimes helpful	43	40	50	47
Seldom helpful	28	31	26	22
Never helpful	17	19	13	14
Don't know or no answer	2	2	1	2

Commercials on Children's Programs

Before the 1971 study, it had been proposed that commercials be completely eliminated from children's programs and, therefore, questions were included specifically asking about such commercials. When the results were published, proponents of the proposal criticized inclusion of the phrase "if they don't take unfair advantage of children" on the grounds that it begged the question. Therefore, when the question was asked again this year, this phrase was excluded.

"Now I'd like to ask you about commercials on children's television programs – and I mean all kinds of children's programs. Some people think there should be no commercials in any kind of children's programs because they feel children can be too easily influenced. Other people, while perhaps objecting to certain commercials, by and large see no harm in them and think children learn from some of them."

Asked in 1971: "How do you feel – that there should be no commercials on any children's programs, or that it is all right to have them if they don't take unfair advantage of children?"

Asked in 1972: "How do you feel – that there should be no commercials on any children's programs, or that it is all right to have them?"

With the difference in wording in the two years, this cannot be considered a trend question. The results for 1972 are noticeably different from 1971. We doubt that the differences reflect real change. With the offending phrase removed, however, only a minority—and a minority of parents of young children—think there should be no commercials. The majority thinks it is all right to have them, by nearly two to one.

			People who have children:					
	Total sample		*Under 6 years old only*		*Both under and over 6 years old*		*6-16 years old only*	
On children's programs:	*1/71*	*11/72*	*1/71*	*11/72*	*1/71*	*11/72*	*1/71*	*11/72*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Should be no commercials	18	32	20	39	21	37	18	31
All right to have them	74	60	78	58	78	62	79	64
Don't know or no answer	8	8	2	3	1	1	3	5

To test the strength of negative feeling, respondents who answered "no commercials" were asked an additional question in both years. As in 1971, more people who had answered "no commercials" to the 1972 question would keep the commercials to keep the programs, rather than give up some programs to get rid of the commercials.

"If eliminating commercials on children's TV programs meant considerably reducing the number of children's programs, which would you favor . . .?"

	1/71 %	11/72 %
Eliminating the commercials and considerably reducing the number of children's programs, or	43	38*
Keeping the commercials to keep the children's programs	47	53
Don't know or no answer	10	9

Proprietary Drug Advertising

Another charge recently launched specifically at drug commercials has been that they have been an important contributing factor to drug abuse by virtue of showing people taking pills for various ailments. Few agree. When presented with a list of possible causes for today's drug problem, four-fifths of the people passed up the chance to name the drug commercials as one of the important causes.

"Narcotics and drug abuse is one of the serious problems facing our country. Here is a list of some of the things that different people have said are causing the drug problem. Which, if any of them, do you think are important causes of our drug problems today? Any others?"

	%
Not enough parental discipline	50
The courts being too lenient	38
Drug laws that are not strict enough	33
The rapid changes in our society that are going on all around us	31
Young people having too much money to spend	25
The thrill of doing something illegal	23
Television commercials showing people taking pills and remedies for various kinds of common ailments	19
Police not enforcing the laws strictly enough	18
The Vietnam War	17
None	2
Don't know or no answer	3

* This is 12% of the *total* sample.

It seems apparent, from the answers to both the new and trend questions on commercials, that the American public continues to endorse the commercially sponsored system of broadcasting. While criticism exists, the critics are in the minority. And even though the minority criticism is sizeable, most of the critics agree with others that having commercials is a fair price to pay for getting their programs.

The Question of Pay Television

Respondents were asked about pay TV, one advantage of which is supposed to be absence of commercials. The pay TV question asked in 1963 was repeated in this study, using the 1963 cost figures with one-half of the sample and using higher figures, to reflect today's inflation, with the other half. A few more than in 1963 expressed interest in subscribing to pay TV. However, most people don't want it, at either price. Sentiment for pay TV exists among only one in four.

"In some places both pay TV and free TV are available for homes. On pay TV you would get to see Broadway shows, the newest movies, championship fights, operas, and other special programs you rarely see now. Of course, you would have to pay to see them — but at less than box office prices. The cost would range from $.50 to $1.25 each, depending on the programs, or to put it on a monthly basis, anywhere from $10 to $25 or $30 per month, depending upon how many you watched. Would you be interested in subscribing to an additional service like this, or wouldn't you be interested?"

	Lower cost figures		*Higher cost figures**
	11/63	*11/72*	*11/72*
	%	%	%
Interested	**16**	**24**	**24**
Not interested	**79**	**72**	**72**
Don't know or no answer	**5**	**4**	**4**

* These were: from $.75 to $2.00 each, depending on the programs, or on a monthly basis, anywhere from $15 to $35 or $45 per month, depending on how many programs were watched.

V

How the Study was Conducted

The Television Information Office indicated the areas or subjects it wished to have covered in this year's study. The Roper Organization assumes full responsibility for the wording of the questions, the study design, and for the analysis of results included in this report.

As in previous surveys, the early questions in the questionnaire dealt with the various media (newspapers, television, magazines, radio). Later the interview focused on television itself. This approach was used so that answers to the earlier questions would not be biased for or against television.

A multistaged, stratified, area probability sample was used, as in the earlier studies. It is a nationwide cross section of the population 18 years and older living in the continental United States. It is representative of all ages 18 and over, all sizes of community, geographic areas and economic levels. A total of 1,982 personal interviews was conducted by experienced, trained interviewers.

Although the method of sampling used in this study was identical to that in previous studies, two differences in implementation should be mentioned in connection with the trend results. First, it was possible in this study to take advantage of the completed 1970 Census figures, which were not available for the 1971 study. Having the advantage of this year's study to compare with previous ones, it appears that our 1971 sample may have been slightly low on average income level and level of education. Thus, where differences in attitudes exist among the various economic and education levels, trend results could be affected. To test the extent of this, the current study was weighted to match it with the economic level and/or education distributions of the 1971 study, and answers to trend questions were retabulated. After weighting, a scattering of answers changed by one percentage point—but none by more than a percentage point.

Second, because of the lowering of age limits for voting, the samples in 1971 as well as this year included 18-to-20-year-olds. To test the possible effect of this, the trend questions in both the 1971 and the current study were weighted to match the age distributions of the 1968 study, and the answers retabulated. In no instance was there more than a one percentage point difference in any answer to any of the questions. This means that trend differences found in the study are meaningful, and are due to changes in attitude of the population over 21 years old—and not due to inclusion of younger people in the sample.

The bulk of the field work for this study was conducted in late November and December, 1972. (Because of, first, weather conditions, followed by the Christmas holidays, interviewing in a few places was not completed until early January.)

BURNS W. ROPER, President
The Roper Organization, Inc.

BURNS W. ROPER, president and board chairman of The Roper Organization, Inc., has 27 years of experience in conducting research. His father, the late Elmo Roper, was until his death a director of the firm. The elder Mr. Roper, one of the pioneers in public opinion and marketing research, came to national notice in 1936 when he accurately predicted the Presidential election within one per cent of the popular vote. The organization's clients include Exxon, Philip Morris, Inc., Western Electric Company and Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, among others.

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THE TELEVISION INFORMATION OFFICE was established in 1959 by the National Association of Broadcasters to serve as a two-way bridge between the television industry and its many publics. The Office provides reference and information services; publicizes programs of special interest; conducts research on public attitudes toward television; and issues publications and audiovisual materials on the structure and operation of the industry. It receives financial support from commercial and educational television stations, the three commercial networks and the National Association of Broadcasters.

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